

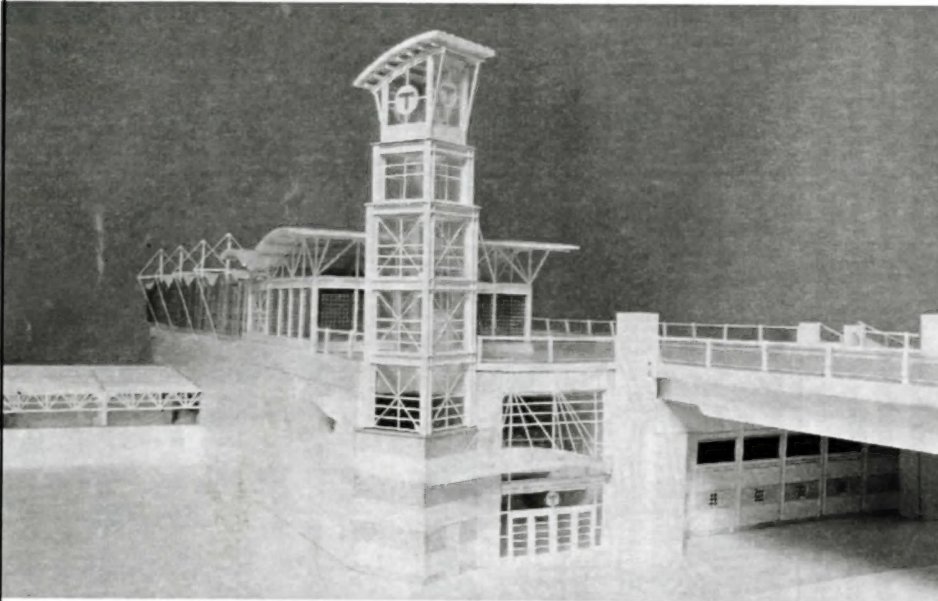
# BOSTON INFORMER

No. 38

The newsletter for people who care about Boston

July—August 1998

## Proposed MBTA World Trade Center station



World Trade Center station on the South Boston Piers Transitway, expected to be open in 2002. The station will be in between the World Trade Center and the new Convention Center. Source: Gillham, Gander + Chin Associates, Inc.

**There is a flurry of activity by the MBTA** this election year, despite tight budgets and an administration that has been lukewarm about transit.

■ **Blue Line station modernization**—Design of new Blue Line stations at Orient Heights and Maverick is underway again, this time by Frederic R. Harris consultants. Platform lengthening to accommodate six-car trains will be completed in 2002. Airport and Aquarium stations, tied into Central Artery/Tunnel construction, won't be completed until about 2004 (?)

■ **Washington Street Replacement**—Design of the "Silver Line" surface bus—likely a compressed natural gas bus—from Dudley Square to an unknown terminus near Downtown Crossing is underway. Incidentally, when the project was first filed with the state in 1990, approval was delayed because the MBTA lacked a satisfactory plan for the downtown terminus. Phase I (surface only) may be in service at the end of 2000. Phase II (underground connection to Boylston) may be open in 2008. Redevelopment of the Don Bosco school in South Cove may offer an opportunity to connect the bus to the Orange Line at the N. E. Medical Center in addition to Boylston station in Phase II.

■ **North Station improvements**—The North Station "superstation"—a dual inbound platform for Green and Orange line trains—is under construction. The elevated Green Line will be moved into a tunnel under the Fleet Center, with construction beginning late next year. The elevated structure is scheduled to be demolished in 2002.

■ **Charles/MGH**—Massachusetts General Hospital has joined the MBTA to sponsor a "design competition of ideas" for renovation of the Red Line Charles/MGH station and the Charles Circle area. Plagued by lack of accessibility by both handicapped and able-bodied passengers and overall decrepit conditions, the elevated station is the hospital's shameful namesake. Single-board entries for the open competition are due October 2. Prizes for three winning entries totaling \$30,000 will be awarded. Call 222-3132 for entry details.

■ **South Boston Piers Transitway**—Despite changing its mind repeatedly on the type of Transitway vehicle—recent statements in January called for 40-foot dual-powered buses; in June, it was 60-foot electric buses—the MBTA is building the line. The 1.5-mile tunnel from South Station to the World Trade Center will also serve the new Fan Pier courthouse and is expected to be in operation in 2002.

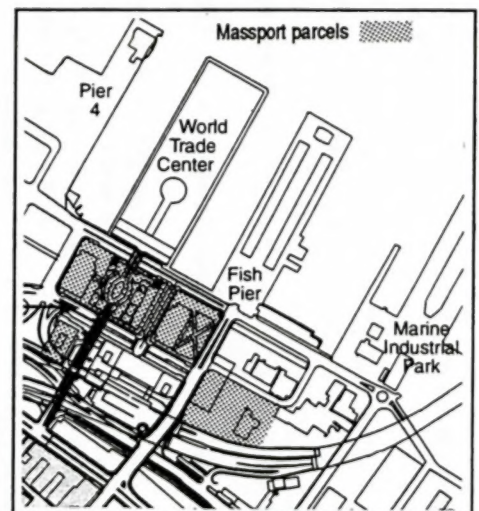
**Massport: Major South Boston Developer.** The City of Boston is working on a South Boston seaport master plan to guide development this fall. The Fan Pier Land Co. and HBC Associates have withdrawn their plan for Fan Pier development, in part because of height limits imposed by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). Yet, the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), a major landowner in South Boston, is pushing ahead with commercial development.

Already built on Massport land, adjacent to the World Trade Center, is the new 427-room, 200-foot high Seaport Hotel. Next to it, on Massport land, the John Drew Co. and Fidelity Investments have broken ground for a 250-foot-high, 16-story office building, with another similar office building planned for the other side of the hotel.

The Massport Board has also approved the Chiofaro Co. plans to build a 470,000 s.f. office building (maximum height of 250 feet), and Corcoran Jennison Co. plans for a 400-room hotel with 80 residential units (maximum height of 200 feet). Both developments will be on Massport land between the Fish Pier and the new Convention Center, east of D Street. A two-acre park will be included.

Massport does not have to comply with the BRA's temporary height limit of 150 feet in the South Boston seaport area.

All of this raises concerns among critics that Massport is more active in promoting commercial development than it is in finding maritime uses for its land, especially since the recently announced waterfront international cargo facility is primarily a warehouse served by trucks.





## People Movers

Bryan Glascock is back as head of Boston's Air Pollution Control Commission having completed a year-long fellowship at the Kennedy School. Charles Button, from MWRA, to Rizzo Associates. Chuck Kostro, from Mass. Highway deputy commissioner, to EOTC chief of staff. Lauren Liss, from deputy secretary for Environmental Affairs, to EOTC general counsel. Charles Baker, from secretary of Executive Office of Administration and Finance, to the private sector. Barry Friswold, from Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) environmental commitments maven, to Insurance Holdings of America. Nancy Lancellotti has moved from the environmental group at the CA/T to become the new commitments maven at the CA/T. Terry McDermott, from McDermott/O'Neill consultants, to other ventures. Russ Lopez, from head of the Environmental Diversity Forum, to PhD studies. Ann Hershfang's tenure on the MassPike Board has ended. Jordan Levy of Worcester has been appointed to the MassPike Board. Jansi Chandler, from City of Lynn planning department, to Boston Redevelopment Authority. Carol Johnson, president of Carol Johnson Assoc., recipient of the American Society of Landscape Architects 1998 Medal.

**1** The Trinity Place development is under construction, with 104 luxury apartments and retail space.

For the development previously referred to by its address, 25 Huntington Ave., the new name has thrown many for a loop. After all, there's already a street called Trinity Place, just down the street at the Hancock Tower. And doesn't Boston have enough obscure custom street addresses? The Public Improvements Commission raised the issue at hearings on the project: public safety officials—fire, police and EMS—need to be able to find an address fast.

With two identical addresses in the same neighborhood, the developer, Raymond Co., was asked by the Commission to refer to the development as "Trinity Place at 25 Huntington Ave."

**2** The dilemma of how to build the tunnel for the South Boston Piers Transitway, which will pass under the Russia Wharf Complex on Congress Street, is finally resolved. The 100-year-old, three-building Russia Wharf Complex, listed on the National Register of Historic Places is protected by Section 4(f) of the Transportation Act of 1966. Original tunneling methods would have had an adverse impact on the buildings. The MBTA studied alternatives ranging from cut-and-cover with underpinning, vacating the building, demolition of two buildings, and ground freezing, among others.

The alternative selected involved building a tunnel under a frozen soil arch which would be reinforced with a shotcrete lining. Extensive underpinning would be unnecessary. This innovative construction method is expected to have no adverse impacts on the historic buildings and would take about two years to complete. As a precaution, a number of historic elements—cast-iron stairwells, granite fascia cladding, wooden panels, etc.—would be removed and stored during the construction.

**3** Luxury condos in a former Boston Edison substation that has no windows? Another strange, but true, story in Boston's hot real estate market. The building, 42 Chauncy St., is behind Macy's and currently stores the Downtown Crossing pushcart fleet. The developer, GrayMac/Goodman Chauncy LLC, will transform the seven-story substation, removing the brick front, installing 16-foot-high windows, and creating luxury units with high-end finishes and appliances. All units will have at least two bathrooms, whirlpools and laundry facilities. The units, 1,650 s.f. to 3,850 s.f., are expected to sell for \$450,000 to \$1.6 million.

The transformation of 42 Chauncy St. is the second residential project announced for Downtown Crossing. Cathartes Investments condominiums on Washington Street were announced last year.

**4** Prudential Center to grow: The Prudential apartments—three buildings with 781 units—have been sold to Avalon Bay Communities for \$130 million. The rest of the Prudential Center property contains 1.2 million s.f. of office space, 500,000 s.f. of retail, and a 2,700-space parking garage. Development rights for additional commercial space, all approved by the city and state in the late 1980s, were sold in June to Boston Properties. Plans are moving forward for the new 30-plus-story Huntington Avenue office tower.

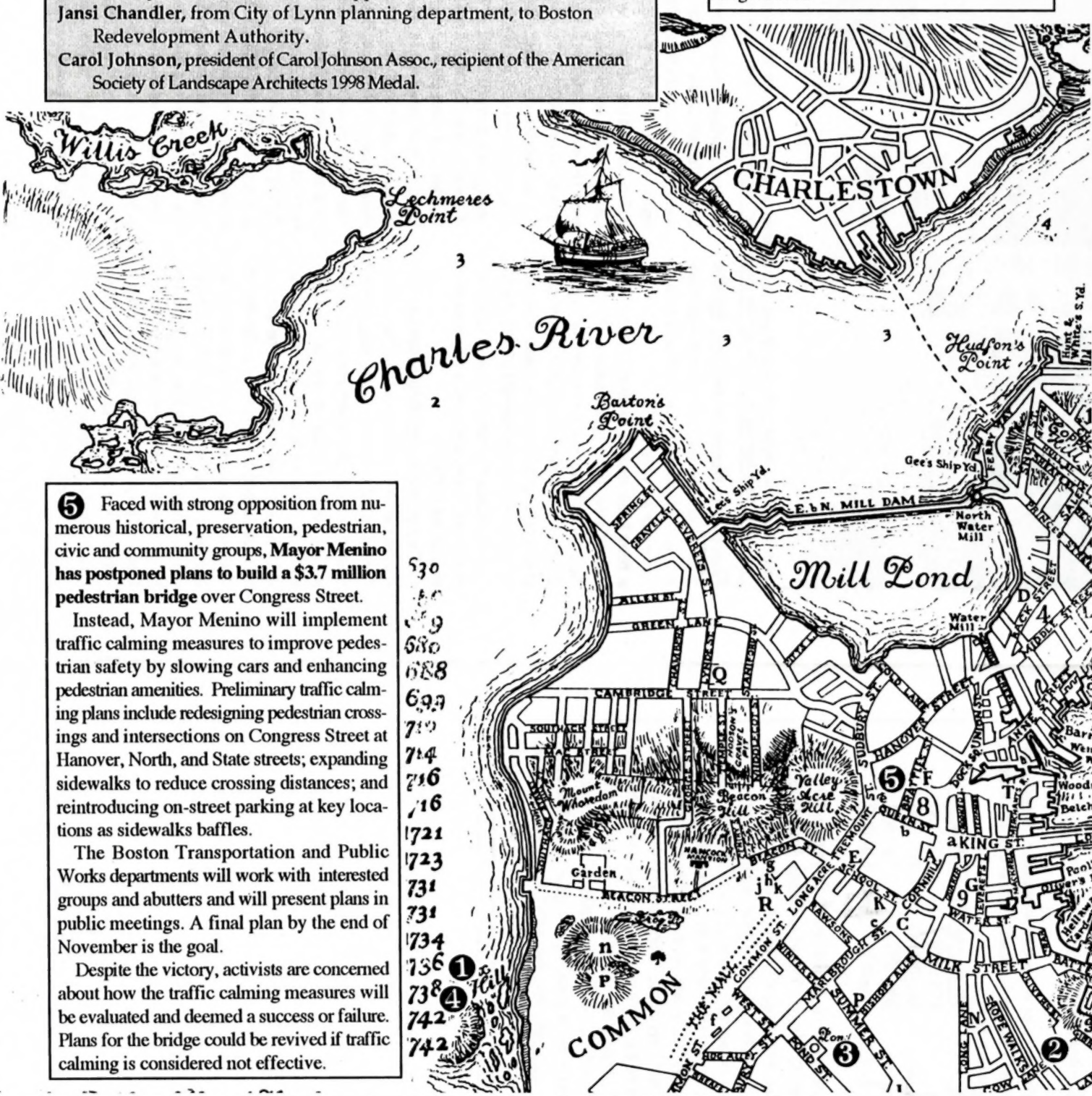
Incidentally, a 1,000-seat restaurant, Marché, will open this fall on the Huntington Avenue side of the retail mall.

**5** Faced with strong opposition from numerous historical, preservation, pedestrian, civic and community groups, Mayor Menino has postponed plans to build a \$3.7 million pedestrian bridge over Congress Street.

Instead, Mayor Menino will implement traffic calming measures to improve pedestrian safety by slowing cars and enhancing pedestrian amenities. Preliminary traffic calming plans include redesigning pedestrian crossings and intersections on Congress Street at Hanover, North, and State streets; expanding sidewalks to reduce crossing distances; and reintroducing on-street parking at key locations as sidewalks baffles.

The Boston Transportation and Public Works departments will work with interested groups and abutters and will present plans in public meetings. A final plan by the end of November is the goal.

Despite the victory, activists are concerned about how the traffic calming measures will be evaluated and deemed a success or failure. Plans for the bridge could be revived if traffic calming is considered not effective.



**Boston Convention Center: Highlights and Sidelights**—The Boston Redevelopment Authority's "Expanded Environmental Notification Form (ENF)" for the proposed Convention Center, filed in accordance with City Council requirements for approval of the Convention Center, describes the project and potential impacts. The document, issued in April 1998, contains the following facts and revelations:

- The Convention Center will be a 1.7 million s.f. facility on a 60-acre site in South Boston bounded by Summer Street, D Street, Cypher Street, and the South Boston Bypass Road.
- It will have 592,000 s.f. of exhibit space with the potential to expand to 1 million s.f., compared to Hynes Convention Center with 200,000 s.f.
- Meeting rooms and public circulation comprise about 24 percent of the total 1.7 million s.f. interior space.
- The project includes a 60,000 s.f. ballroom and 2,000 underground parking spaces.
- A hotel is currently not shown on or adjacent to the site.
- "Gate shows"—open to the public—will not be allowed, only trade shows and association meetings.
- Access by public transportation will be mainly by the South Boston Piers Transitway, which is not yet built. The station for the Convention

Center will be in between the Convention Center and World Trade Center, about the same walking distance as the Hynes/ICA MBTA station on Massachusetts Avenue from the Hynes Convention Center.

- Problematic is the viability of hotels, shops, restaurants and entertainment facilities catering to the conventioners, because "set-up" and "tear-down" times for a convention are about equal to actual time of the convention itself. Even if the center were fully booked with large conventions, which is virtually impossible, there would be no conventioners almost 50 percent of the time, and unlike Back Bay, there is no neighborhood to provide a steady base.
- Although the plan is to try to book smaller conventions, most convention planners would find the Hynes Convention Center preferable with Back Bay's plethora of hotels, shops, restaurants, street life and easy access to the theater district.
- Even without the new Convention Center, 1999 will see the most visitors to Boston on record, with Seybold desktop publishing seminars, NCAA basketball, Women's World Cup, MacWorld (back from New York), major league baseball's All-Star Game, International Seafood Show, Yankee Dental Congress, and the PGA Ryder cup, among many others.

After 20 years of planning, major air-rights development at South Station may finally happen. TUDC, designated developer of the South Station Air Rights project by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1991, has joined with Hines Interests Limited Partnership to propose a new 2.1 million s.f. project for the site.

The project will include a 50-story, 1.25 million s.f. office/retail building and 1,150 parking spaces; a 24-story, 500-room hotel, sharing parking with the office space; and a nine-story, 430,000 s.f. office/research building with big floor plates, 130,000 s.f. of expansion space for the bus terminal, and 250 parking spaces. The office tower, at 743 feet high, would be the second tallest building in Boston.

The proponents filed a Notice of Project Change (state) and Project Notification Form (city) and will file a combined state/city document to address issues raised. They are moving fast to open while the economy is strong.





## Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

**The Boston Informer** is published by ATC Information, Inc., six times yearly in Boston, Massachusetts. President: Anthony Casendino; vice-presidents, Anne McKinnon, Chris Fincham.

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**The Big Dig: "It's Worth the Weight."**

## THE BOSTON INFORMER

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## You were asking...

- Q. What will happen to the Harborlights concert tent when its lease runs out at the end of this season?**
- A.** Earlier rumors put Harborlights at the North Jetty (next to Marine Industrial Park) in South Boston. However, recently owner Don Law sold the company to New York's SFX Entertainment which also leases the Colonial and Wilbur theaters and owns the Charles Playhouse. Plans may have become more ambitious—perhaps to build a year-round seaport entertainment district in South Boston, which could benefit from the attendees at the nearby new Boston Convention Center. With the development plans for the existing site still uncertain, the Pritzger family could extend the Harborlights lease one year, too.

- Q. How will the new Boston Convention Center compare in size with Boston's existing convention centers?**

- A.** Here's the breakdown:

<u>Convention Ctr.</u>	<u>Mtg. Rooms (s.f.)</u>	<u>Exhibition (s.f.)</u>
So. Boston	164,500	592,000
John B. Hynes	360,000	193,000
Bayside Expo	300,000	240,000
World Trade Ctr.	76,000	120,000

- Q. I hear Northeastern University is expanding toward Lower Roxbury. What are they building?**

- A.** Northeastern, wanting for years to expand east across the Orange Line, bought the Pyramid Building on Columbus Avenue several years ago and last year bought the former Registry of Motor Vehicles building at nearby Ruggles station. NU is also embroiled in a controversial project across from Carter Playground on Columbus Avenue where the city's master plan calls for affordable housing. NU is proposing student housing for over 800 and some affordable ownership units. NU also wants to start construction of a 960-space garage on the open space at Ruggles station (no MBTA parking, but 90 spaces for the Police Headquarters across the street).